CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	Bardswich Wet Georgia Gulch Road LUL
Proposed Implementation Date:	May 1, 2006
Proponent:	Joe Bardswich, P.O. Box 156, Virginia City, MT 59755 Phone: 406-843-5383
Location:	Section 4-T4S-R5W (Common School Trust), Section 6-T4S-R5W (State Norma School Trust), and Section 33-T3S-R5W (Common School Trust)
County:	Madison

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent has requested the DNRC to issue a Land Use License for the purpose of transporting approximately 400 truckloads of ore across about 1.25 miles of State land utilizing an established existing road. The hauling of ore is expected to last approximately two months. The ore would be removed from U.S. Forest Service land in Section 26-T3S-R5W and travel southwest through Bureau of Land Management (BLM), State of Montana, and private land on its journey to State Highway 287.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Dillon Unit Manager Richard Moore conducted a field review on October 31, 2006. Scoping notices were sent to the Lessees (Edwin and Katherine Guinnane, Hamilton Ranches Partnership), BLM (T. Bozorth, J. Daugherty, B. Gunderson), Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (B. Brannon, R. Oswald), DNRC Archaeologist Patrick Rennie, and the Montana Natural Heritage Program.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

The Madison County Weed Board administers the State weed laws in Madison County.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A: No Action Alternative. An LUL would not be issued. Current recreational use, grazing leasing, and wildland fire suppression activities would continue.

Alternative B: An LUL would be issued.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:
Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The existing road the proposed project would utilize is relatively level with less than a 5% grade. The road is currently deeply rutted in places and the proponent would be required to improve the road to comply with Best Management Practice (BMP) standards by grading the road and installing proper drainage features where necessary. Minimal impacts are anticipated.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:
Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

The road is currently deeply rutted in places and the proponent would be required to improve the road to comply with BMP standards by grading the road and installing proper drainage features where necessary. The route would be inspected prior to project use to insure BMP and Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) compliance in order to minimize the potential for sedimentation into adjacent stream reaches. Minimal impacts are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:
What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

There would be an increase in the amount of internal combustion exhaust gases and an increase in the amount of airborne particulates due to the increased amount of heavy vehicle traffic during the two-month project. Minimal impacts are anticipated.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:
What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Due to the relatively flat terrain and the use of an existing established road, minimal impacts to the existing vegetative cover are anticipated. Increased motorized vehicle traffic would potentially carry noxious weed seed from other locations and would increase the likelihood of noxious weeds being introduced into the proposed project area. The proponent would monitor for weeds and spray where necessary for a period of two years after project activities cease. Minimal impacts are expected.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:
Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

A variety of big game, small mammals, raptors, songbirds, and grouse use this area. Increased motorized travel in the proposed project area may alter wildlife movement and patterns.
The Montana FWP identified the road is located in big game winter range. Project activities would occur only during the summer months. Minimal impacts are anticipated.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:
Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program identified three vertebrate animals species of concern near the proposed project area: Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Mountain Plover, and McCown's Longspur. Also identified were two vascular plants: Rocky Mountain Dandelion and Slender Indian Paintbrush.

The **Townsend's Big-eared Bat** is inferred to occupy the proposed project area. Due to the proposed project using existing roads and the short two-month duration, minimal impacts are anticipated.

Mountain Plover have been located approximately one-half mile to the north of the proposed project area. Due to the proposed project using existing roads, the short two-month duration, and project activities not starting until after May 1 (avoiding some of the nesting season), minimal impacts are anticipated.

McCown's Longspur have been located approximately two miles to the north of the proposed project area. Due to the proposed project using existing roads, the short two-month duration, and project activities not starting until after May 1 (avoiding some of the nesting season), minimal impacts are anticipated.

Rocky Mountain Dandelion is found within the proposed project area. Due to the proposed project using established existing roads for only one season of use and the proponent monitoring and spraying for noxious weeds for two years after project activities cease, minimal impacts are anticipated.

Slender Indian Paintbrush is found within the proposed project area. Due to the proposed project using established existing roads for only one season of use and the proponent monitoring and spraying for noxious weeds for two years after project activities cease, minimal impacts are anticipated.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No cultural resources have been identified in the project area. As an established existing road, the DNRC archaeologist recommends no additional archaeological investigative work provided all project activities remain within the current road margin. No significant impacts are anticipated.

11. AESTHETICS:
Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The proposed project area is not visible to any populated areas. Due to its remote location and two-month project duration, aesthetics should not be adversely affected.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:
Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

None.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:
List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

A DNRC range evaluation was conducted in 2003 on Section 6-T4S-R5W and in 2004 on Section 4-T4S-R5W and on Section 33-T3S-R5W.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:
Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

Increased heavy truck traffic could pose additional safety issues to recreational users driving the road. Appropriate signing of the road to warn and alert recreational users would decrease the potential for possible accidents between the haul trucks and other vehicles. Minimal impacts are anticipated.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

None.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:
Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

None.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:
Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

None.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:
Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services.

None.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The DNRC Administrative Rules for State Land Leasing ARM 36.25.101 through 36.25.141.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

Persons possessing a valid state lands recreational use license or FWP conservation license may conduct recreational activities in the proposed project area. The established existing road the proposed project would utilize is currently open to motorized vehicles. The proposed project would not affect the existing access for the general public.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing.

None.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

None.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

None.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:
Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The proposed action has provided $50 to the Trust in the form of an LUL application fee and would provide an additional $500.00 ($100.00 minimum LUL rental fee plus $1.00/truckload) LUL one-time rental fee. Existing grazing leases would continue to provide $911.46 (2006 rates) annual revenue to the Trust.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Richard A. Moore	Date: November 9, 2006
	Title: Dillon Unit Manager	

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Issue a LUL allowing use of the existing road for ore hauling purposes.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Significant impacts are not expected to occur as result of the proposed activity. The use of the existing road will be of short duration and will result in improving the drainage features of the road and consequently reducing erosion. There is are no unique features or critical habitat for threatened or endangered species in the immediate vicinity of the project. Mitigation measures are common and proven effective for reducing potential impacts.

Measures Recommended to Mitigate Potential Impacts

1. The road will be improved to comply with BMPs by grading prior to and during use, and installing appropriate drainage features where necessary. A final grading will be required after project activities cease.
2. The Proponent will monitor and spray for weeds for two years after the end of project.
3. The Proponent will place appropriate signs to notify and alert the general recreational users of the hauling activities occurring upon the road.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[X]	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Garry Williams	
	Title: CLO Area Manager	
Signature: Garry Williams		Date: 11/15/06